

OVERSEAS TRAINED PHYSICIANS GUIDELINES (AUSTRALIA)

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Introduction

What is specialist assessment?

Specialist assessment is the process by which overseas trained physicians (OTPs) and paediatricians gain registration to practise as specialists in Australia. Before applying for specialist registration with the Medical Board of Australia (MBA), the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) will assess whether your training, assessment, experience, recent practice and continuing professional development are comparable to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician.

The RACP undertakes the specialist assessment process on behalf of the MBA. These guidelines have been developed in line with the *MBA Standards for specialist medical college assessment of specialist international medical graduates*. The RACP carries out the assessment of OTPs in line with the MBA guiding principles of fairness, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

The RACP assesses OTPs in the following specialties

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Addiction Medicine | General Paediatrics | Occupational & Environmental Medicine |
| Cardiology | Geriatric Medicine | Paediatric Emergency Medicine |
| Clinical Genetics | Immunology & Allergy | Palliative Medicine |
| Clinical Pharmacology | Infectious Diseases | Public Health Medicine |
| Clinical Haematology | Medical Oncology | Rehabilitation Medicine |
| Community & Child Health | Neonatal & Perinatal Medicine | Respiratory Medicine |
| Endocrinology | Nephrology | Rheumatology |
| Gastroenterology | Neurology | Sleep Medicine |
| General Medicine | Nuclear Medicine | Sexual Health Medicine |

Multiple specialties

You may apply for specialist recognition in multiple specialties in which you are qualified. You may be required to undertake separate periods of supervised practice through top up training and/or peer review for each specialty. The RACP may consider applications for positions that address concurrent progress in both specialties.

If you cannot find your specialty, another Australasian Specialist Medical College may assess it.

Who is eligible to apply for specialist assessment?

To be eligible to apply for specialist assessment with the RACP, you must:

- have completed specialist training overseas in one of the specialties that is assessed by the RACP
- be recognised as a consultant physician or paediatrician in your country of training
- have applied to the Australian Medical Council (AMC) for primary source verification of both your primary medical degree and specialist qualification(s)
- have completed an English language test. Please refer to the Medical Board of Australia's (MBA) registration standards for further information on English language requirements.

To be eligible to apply for area of need assessment, you must:

- meet the criteria for specialist assessment
- concurrently apply for specialist assessment
- have been offered a designated area of need position.

Commencing the specialist assessment process

These guidelines provide essential information for OTPs seeking assessment to be recognised to practise as a specialist in Australia. Please read these guidelines before making general enquiries about the specialist assessment process.

You must:

- familiarise yourself with the information in this publication
- understand and meet the requirements of the specialist assessment process and procedures
- understand and fulfil your roles and responsibilities as an applicant on the specialist pathway.

Employment in Australia

It is important to note that the College, as an Education Provider, is unable to find employment for OTPs, trainees or Fellows. Our role is limited as we are delegated the responsibility to assess applicants' comparability to an Australian trained Physician (only) by the Medical Board of Australia. It is your responsibility to research potential employment opportunities and to secure a suitable top up training or peer review position in Australia within the timeframes specified. These positions must meet the specific requirements outlined by the RACP.

It is strongly recommended that you research potential employment opportunities before applying for specialist assessment. Securing a suitable position is likely to be very competitive.

Additional important information for OTPs



All applicants should be aware that obtaining employment in Australia can be competitive. If determined to be partially or substantially comparable, OTP applicants have a maximum of two years to commence their requirements. It is recommended that applicants explore potential employment opportunities in Australia before applying for specialist assessment.



OTP applicants should review and consider the following points before submitting a specialist assessment application to the RACP. This additional information sets out important guidance on the training, qualification, assessments and experience that can be considered for specialist assessment. Applicants should note that all specialist assessment fees are non-refundable.



The RACP is not responsible for and cannot assist OTPs with:

- finding employment
- immigration or visa requirements
- medical registration matters
- (in Australia) Medicare provider status
- (in Aotearoa New Zealand) MCNZ supervision and vocational practice assessment (VPA)
- English language testing requirements
- primary source verification of overseas qualifications.

Points 1-3 are minimum requirements for a specialist assessment application to progress with the RACP. If you are unable to meet these requirements, you should seek clarification from the OTP Team before submitting your application for specialist assessment.

1

You are required to hold a specialist qualification in the specialty being assessed and to provide evidence of current or previous specialist registration in the specialty being assessed.

2

If you have limited experience at the level of a consultant physician or paediatrician, you must have successfully completed a minimum of four years of accredited overseas specialist training. Accredited specialist training must be formally recognised in your country of training.

3

If you have less than four years of accredited overseas specialist training, you should have a minimum of three years consultant experience at the level of an Australasian trained physician or paediatrician in the specialty in which you are applying for assessment.

The following points also apply if relevant to your application.

4

Training on the 'Short term training in a medical specialty pathway' is not accredited or monitored by the RACP. Short term training in a medical specialty that is not accredited by an overseas training institution cannot be recognised for the minimum period of accredited overseas specialist training as outlined in item 2.

5

OTPs who have attempted the RACP Training Program but have been withdrawn from the program by the RACP, are not eligible to apply for specialist assessment unless they can provide evidence of a further period of accredited overseas training and experience since exiting the RACP Training Program. The period of training and experience must be verifiable and acceptable to the College.

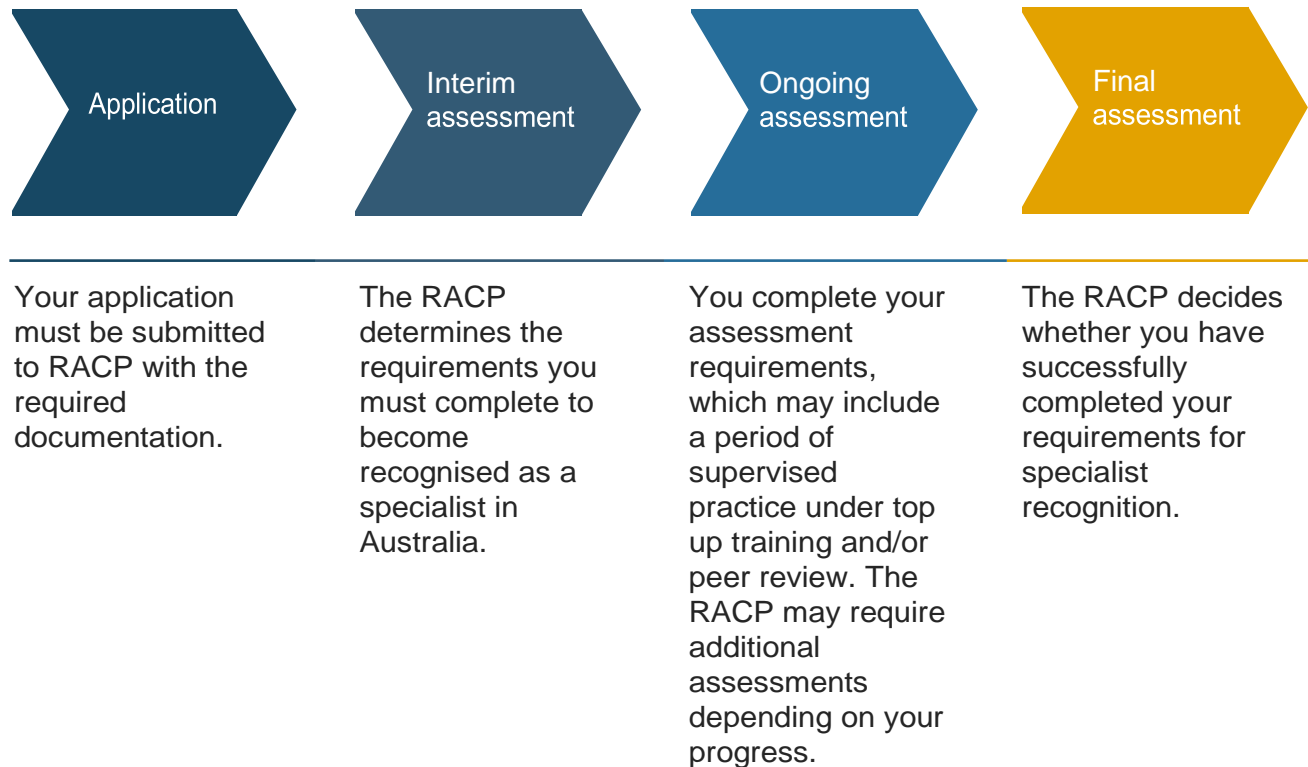
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OTPs wishing to apply for re-assessment must be able to demonstrate significant further overseas training and/or experience before seeking re-assessment by the RACP on the specialist pathway. It is not acceptable to submit an application for re-assessment within two years of an interim assessment or final assessment decision.

Note: The requirements in points 1-6 (above) apply in conjunction with the RACP requirements for documentation as are current at the time of the application.

Summary of specialist assessment stages

Specialist assessment can take **one to four years** to complete, or potentially longer if there are interruptions to your assessments. Fees apply at each stage.



What is area of need assessment?



Area of need assessment is for OTPs who have been offered a position in Australia in a designated 'area of need'. An 'area of need' is determined by the relevant state or territory health authority. The RACP is not responsible for designating area of need positions or assisting applicants to find an area of need position. Your employer will be able to advise you if the position you have been offered is designated an area of need.

If you have secured an area of need position, you will need to be assessed by the RACP before being eligible to practise in the position. Due to the demanding nature of area of need positions, the RACP will only support your appointment if there is suitable supervision available and you are found to be substantially comparable to an Australian trained specialist.

The RACP requires all applicants seeking area of need assessment to apply at the same time for specialist assessment in the relevant specialty/specialties.

Applicants holding general registration with AHPRA



Most OTPs need to apply to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) for registration, so that they can complete their specialist assessment requirements. You should contact AHPRA for information on the appropriate registration pathway for you.

However, if you completed your medical degree and internship in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand before completing specialist qualifications in another country, or if you have completed the Australian Medical Council (AMC) Certificate, you may already have general registration as a non-specialist doctor.

If so, you do not need to apply to AHPRA for limited registration while undergoing specialist assessment. In all other respects, the process is the same.

What is assessment in a limited scope of practice?



The MBA registration standard recognises that a specialist may be registered in a limited scope of practice, in which case the MBA will impose conditions on the specialist's registration, limiting their practice to that scope. The conditions will be published on the public Register of Medical Practitioners.

Registration in a limited scope of practice should not be confused with limited registration granted to OTPs who do not hold general registration.

You may apply for specialist recognition in a limited scope of practice. To be considered, you should demonstrate a high level of subspecialist skill within your limited scope without being able to demonstrate substantially comparable skill across the full scope of the recognised specialty.

A 'high level of subspecialist skill' refers to high level skills in a particular subspecialty that are substantially comparable to the skills of an Australian trained subspecialist, whose practice is predominantly in one subspecialty area. The applicant will generally have substantial experience in their country of training as a subspecialist.

Interim assessment of your application in a limited scope may determine that you are:

- Not comparable to an Australian specialist or
- Partially or substantially comparable to an Australian trained specialist in the full scope of the specialty and/or
- Substantially comparable to an Australian trained specialist in a limited scope of practice. You cannot be found partially comparable in a limited scope of practice because you must demonstrate a high level of subspecialist skill within the limited scope of practice for which you are applying.

If your interim assessment is substantially comparable in a limited scope of practice, you will be advised of what further peer review or assessment you must successfully complete for specialist recognition.

If you complete an assessment in a limited scope of practice, you will be recommended for specialist recognition with conditions placed on your registration, restricting your scope of practice.

Who will assist with your application?

The OTP Team at the RACP manages all specialist assessment and area of need applications.

Once you have submitted your application, your Case Officer will contact you and guide you through the assessment process.



Email address:
OTP@racp.edu.au

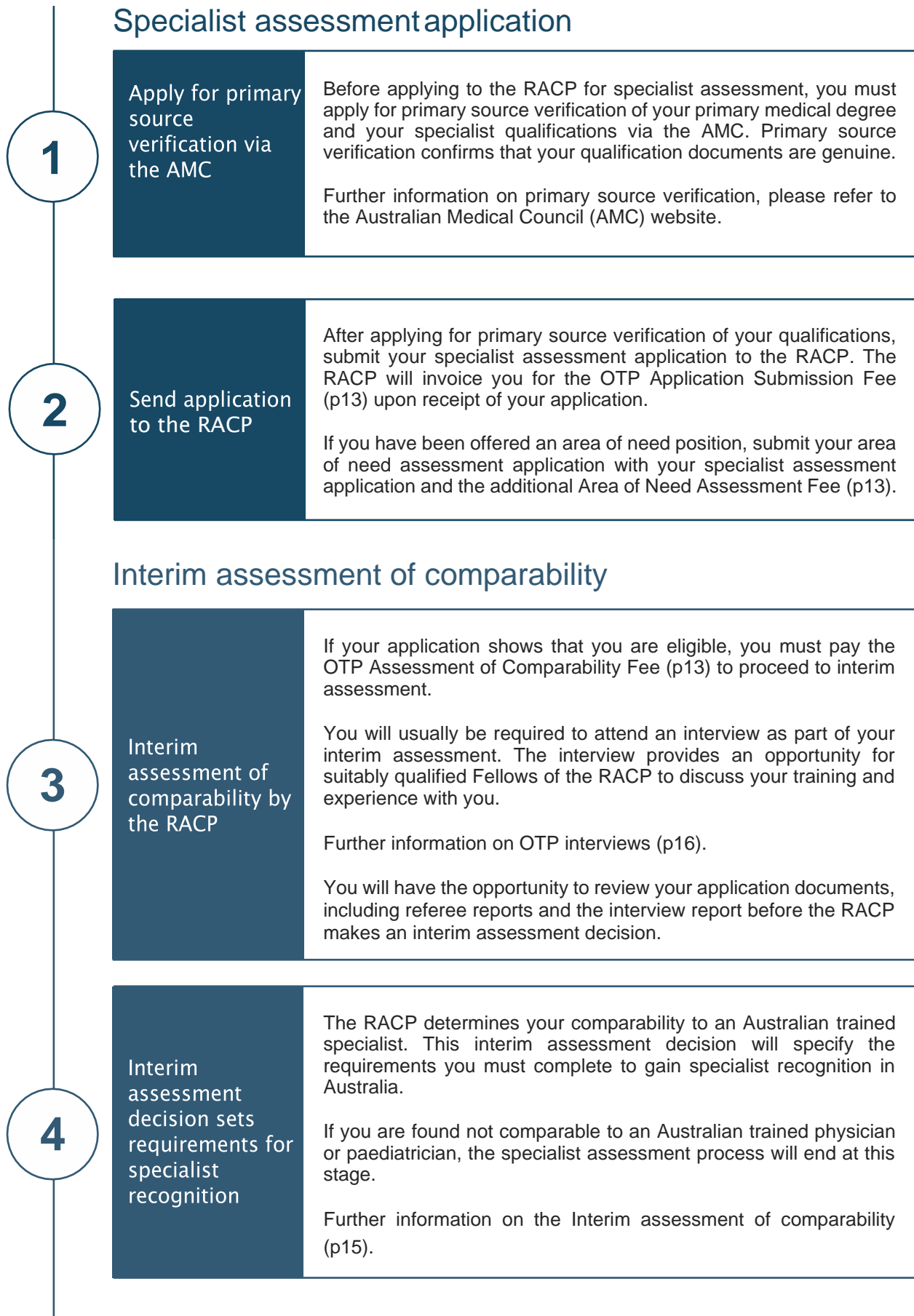


Contact numbers:
1300 697 227 (within Australia)
+61 2 9256 5444 (from overseas)



Postal address:
OTP Team
The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
145 Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000

The specialist assessment process



Ongoing assessment

5

Complete requirements for specialist recognition

If the interim assessment decision is that you are substantially or partially comparable to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician, you can commence your requirements for specialist recognition. You must pay the OTP Work-Based Assessment Annual Fee (p13) at this stage.

Your requirements may include one or more of the following:

- work-based assessment tasks
- top up training (supervised practice)
- clinical practice under peer review
- a practice visit
- OTP orientation program.
- cultural safety course
- multi source feedback (MSF)
- Fellowship examination(s)

Further information on Ongoing assessment (p21).

Final assessment

6

Final assessment decision

The RACP assesses whether you have satisfactorily completed your requirements for specialist recognition.

If you have satisfactorily completed your requirements, the RACP will notify the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and recommend you for specialist recognition. In most cases, the RACP will also recommend you for Fellowship of the appropriate Division, Faculty or Chapter of the RACP. The RACP's Member Services team will contact you to advise how to apply for Fellowship.

Further information on Final assessment (p30).

If you do not complete the requirements within the allotted time, you may fail to achieve specialist recognition.

7

Contact AHPRA to apply for specialist registration

8

Apply for Fellowship of the RACP

Assessment fees

There are fees at each stage of the specialist assessment and area of need assessment processes. You should be aware of the required fees before applying to the RACP. All fees are non-refundable.

At each stage, your assessment will not advance until you pay the required fee. You are advised to review the fees information provided on the RACP website.

OTP Application Submission Fee

You must pay this fee upon submission of your OTP application form for specialist assessment.

OTP Assessment of Comparability Fee

When all of the documentation for your application has been received, the RACP will determine whether you are eligible to proceed to the assessment stage. You pay this fee before interview or paper-based review of your application.

OTP Work-Based Assessment Annual Fee

You must pay this fee with your first application for the approval, monitoring and assessment of a top up training position or a peer review position, and then each year that you are continuing in work-based assessment.

Area of Need Assessment Fee

You must pay this fee if you submit an area of need application.

Practice Visit Fee

You are required to pay this fee only if the RACP determines that you require a practice visit as part of your specialist assessment.

Applying for specialist assessment

1. Review the information in these guidelines before submitting a specialist assessment application.
2. Apply for primary source verification of your qualifications via the AMC before applying to the RACP.
3. Submit the relevant documentation (as detailed below).

The following items are mandatory. Your application will not progress until all of the below documents are received by the RACP. All documents are to be submitted electronically to the OTP email address: OTP@racp.edu.au.

- Proof of primary source verification (PSV) via the Australian Medical Council (AMC). Before applying to the College, applicants **must apply** to the AMC for primary source verification of their primary medical degree and specialist qualification(s). Applicants can obtain the PSV application form from the AMC website. Original language and English translations must comply with the AHPRA translation policy.
- Completed RACP specialist assessment application form
- Payment of the OTP application submission fee online (you will receive a link from the RACP upon submission of your application)
- Certificate of specialist registration from the appropriate overseas registration body to demonstrate your status as a specialist in your country of training. This certificate must confirm your eligibility for practice as a consultant physician/paediatrician in the specialty in which you are applying for assessment.
- EPIC identification form
- Logbook of procedures relevant to your specialty. Logbooks are normally completed during specialist training and should be signed by supervisors or the institution that accredited your specialist training.
- Documentary evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD):
 - a record/transcript of CPD activities (no longer than a page) and/or
 - CPD activities for the past 24 months and/or
 - CPD Certificate from relevant overseas body.
- Proof of completion of an appropriate English Language examination. Applicants should refer to the Medical Board of Australia's (MBA) registration standards for English language.

The following items may be required. Please submit if applicable to your application.

- Certified copy of change of name documentation (if applicable)
- Disclosure of personal information form (if applicable)
- Area of need application form (if concurrently applying for Area of need assessment)

Your Case Officer will advise you of any missing documents upon receipt of your specialist assessment application and payment. The College may also request further documents if required. You will be given three months to submit the required documents before your application expires.

Interim assessment of comparability

The interim assessment of comparability determines the requirements you must complete to be recognised as a specialist in Australia. To determine comparability, the RACP will:

- review the documentation you have provided in your application
- request reports from your nominated referees
- conduct an interview if necessary
- make any other enquiries it considers necessary.

The RACP will consider your training, assessment, experience, recent practice and continuing professional development as a whole to assess your comparability to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician. It will establish the requirements you must complete to be recognised as a specialist.

In assessing competency, the RACP considers technical clinical skills as well as the non-technical professional attributes described in the RACP's professionalism and performance guidelines for members.

An interim assessment determines if you are substantially comparable, partially comparable, or not comparable to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician. It is not a conclusive decision that you are competent to practice as a specialist in Australia. It enables you to progress to ongoing assessment to complete the requirements stipulated by the RACP. An interview is usually required as part of your interim assessment.

Summary of preliminary review

To ensure procedural fairness and transparency, you will be provided with a summary of preliminary review (SPR) before your interim assessment decision is determined by the OTP assessment subcommittee. The SPR will include copies of the documentation obtained by the RACP which you have not yet reviewed including referee reports and/or your interview report. You will have 21 days to respond to the SPR with any further information you would like considered by the subcommittee.

Interview

The interview provides an opportunity for suitably qualified Fellows of the RACP to discuss your training and experience with you. They will be seeking to assess how well prepared you are to practise as a specialist in Australia. The interview lasts for about one hour. You are encouraged to research the Australian healthcare system and ask questions during the interview.

Interviews are conducted via videoconference and are arranged according to the availability of your interview panel.

If relevant, information about the videoconferencing equipment used by the RACP will be sent to you when your interview date is confirmed. You will need to cover all costs related to your interview.

If you are being interviewed by video conference your costs will include (but not be limited to) access to a fast and secure cable internet connection, a computer or laptop, and a webcam.



How to prepare for your interview

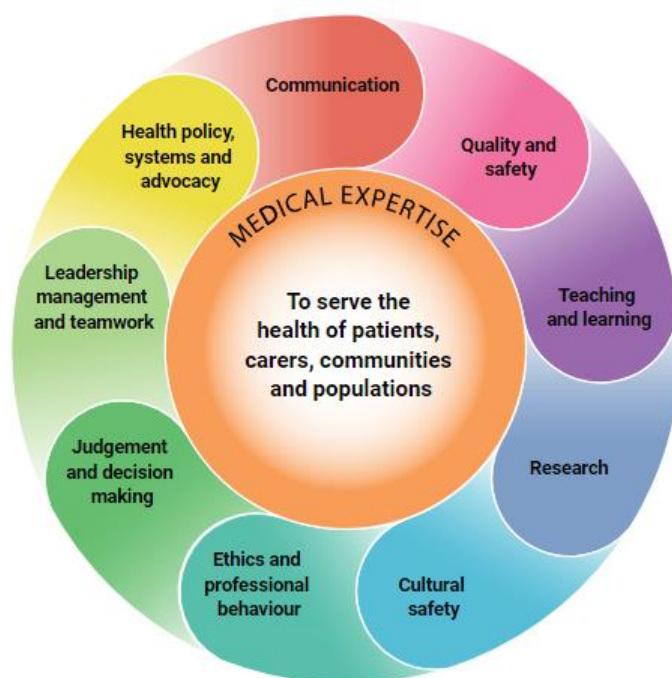
The interviewers will prepare questions based on the information you have provided in your application. Questions may cover the following areas:

- basic or core training
- advanced or specialist training
- specialist practice and recency of practice in line with the Medical Board of Australia's registration standard
- participation in continuing professional development
- your quality assurance practices
- attainment of higher qualifications
- contributions to the field of medicine
- your readiness for practice in Australia.

Interviewers will assess your comparability, taking into consideration your technical clinical skills and the non-technical professional attributes described in the RACP's Professional Practice Framework. You should familiarise yourself with this document before the interview.

It is useful for you to have a good understanding of the Australian physician/paediatrician training program to demonstrate how your training, assessment and experience compare.

You should familiarise yourself with the RACP's Basic Training curricula and the relevant Advanced Training curricula, available on the RACP website.



After your interview

You will be provided with a SPR before your documentation is presented to the OTP assessment subcommittee for decision. The SPR will be provided within 21 days of your interview date and will include a copy of your interview report, referee reports and any other documents obtained by the RACP that you have not reviewed. To ensure that all information is taken into consideration and assessed by the subcommittee, you will have up to 21 days to review and provide additional documentation to support your application. Assessment subcommittee meetings usually take place monthly, and your Case Officer will advise you when your application will be considered. If no response is received within this timeframe, your application will proceed to the next stage.

Important considerations



There will be a waiting period for your interview. The RACP processes applications in the order that they are received. Your Case Officer will advise you of the timeframe when confirming your availability for an interview.

Area of need assessment

An area of need assessment is always conducted in relation to a specific area of need position. You must have an offer of a specific position before applying for an area of need assessment.

If you have secured an area of need position when you apply for specialist assessment, you can submit an area of need assessment at the same time. You may also submit an area of need assessment after your interim assessment decision or during the completion of your requirements if you have secured such a position.

The RACP will consider the application to determine whether you have the specific training and experience required for the position.

Peer review for specialist recognition may be undertaken in a prospectively approved area of need position, if suitable peer review arrangements can be put in place and approved by the RACP.

Definition of suitability for an area of need position

The RACP will advise that the OTP is either suitable or not suitable to undertake the responsibilities of the area of need position as described.

If the OTP is found to be suitable, the RACP will determine any recommendations including proposed restrictions on scope of practice.

Specialist assessment definitions of comparability



The RACP assessment determines your comparability to an Australian trained specialist, using the definitions of comparability provided by the Medical Board of Australia. We have adapted these definitions only to make them specific to the RACP.

Substantially comparable

Applicants are assessed as suitable to undertake the intended scope of practice, taking full responsibility for individual patients with oversight by an RACP approved peer reviewer.

To be considered substantially comparable, an applicant must have satisfied the RACP's requirements in relation to previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and continuing professional development (CPD). The OTP may be required to undertake a period of up to 12 months full time equivalent supervised practice under peer review, which is to be approved by the RACP. This may involve the satisfactory completion of a workplace-based assessment (WBA). Supervised practice ensures that an OTP's level of performance is similar to that of an Australian trained specialist commencing practice and assists with their transition to the Australian health system. It also provides professional support and enables access to CPD. The length of peer review and nature of assessment is determined by the RACP on a case-by-case basis, but the peer review period will not exceed 12 months.

Following satisfactory completion of peer review (and any other requirements set by the RACP), the applicant may be eligible for Fellowship without formal examination and may apply for registration as a specialist.

Substantially comparable applicants will not be eligible to apply for specialist registration during the period of peer review (supervised practice).

Partially comparable

Applicants are assessed as suitable to undertake their intended scope of practice in an RACP approved supervised capacity.

To be considered partially comparable, an applicant must have satisfied the RACP's requirements in relation to previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and continuing professional development (CPD) that will enable them to reach the standard of an Australian trained specialist within a maximum period of 24 months full time equivalence of practice. During this period, the OTP will undertake upskilling with associated assessment under a supervisor(s) approved by the RACP. This is to ensure that the level of performance reaches that of an Australian trained specialist. This period of supervised practice will assist the OTP with the transition to the Australian health system, will provide them with professional support and enable access to CPD. The length of supervised practice and nature of assessment is determined by the RACP on a case-by-case basis, but the supervised practice period must not exceed 24 months.

Following satisfactory completion of this process (and any other requirements set by the RACP), the applicant may be eligible for Fellowship and may apply for registration as a specialist.

Partially comparable applicants will not be eligible to apply for specialist registration during the period of supervised practice.

Not comparable

Applicants do not meet the requirements of the RACP on previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and continuing professional development (CPD) and/or the applicant is assessed as requiring more than 24 months full time equivalent of practice to be at the level of an Australian trained specialist. They may be eligible to seek registration to practise in another capacity that will enable them to gain the AMC certificate, and subsequently seek formal training and assessment with the RACP.

Ongoing assessment

If your interim assessment is partially or substantially comparable, the RACP monitors the ongoing training, assessments and supervised practice you are required to complete for specialist recognition. Ongoing assessment requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis. You will be notified of your requirements and the timeframe for completion when receiving your interim assessment decision. Your requirements will include:

- supervised practice under peer review
- OTP orientation program
- cultural safety course
- participation in continuing professional development (CPD).

Your requirements may also include:

- work-based assessment tasks
- supervised practice under top up training in the workplace
- long or short courses
- multi-source feedback exercises
- a practice visit
- Fellowship/Exit examination(s) (if applicable to the specialty)

The RACP may require you to complete additional assessments depending on your progress. You must complete your training and assessments in the order specified by the RACP. Any requirement for supervised practice under top up training must be completed before commencing practice under peer review.

Purpose of training and assessments

The purpose of top up training is to develop particular competencies required in Australian specialist practice and to raise the skills of a partially comparable OTP to substantially comparable. The purpose of the assessments for specialist recognition is to confirm that you are able to practise safely and competently as a specialist in Australia.

Supervision during assessment

During specialist assessment you will practise under supervision even if you have considerable senior experience overseas.

You must ensure you have appropriate registration to practise while completing your specialist recognition requirements. You should contact AHPRA for information on medical registration. The College is unable to provide advice on which pathway/type of registration is suitable for

individual applicants.

Registration during ongoing assessment

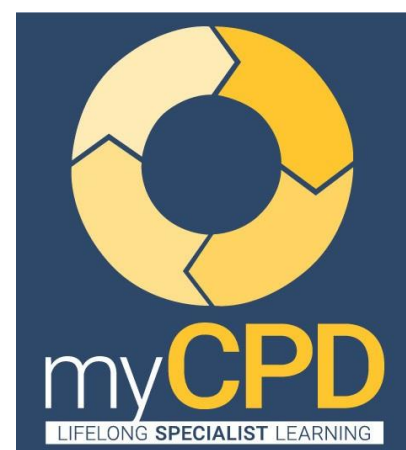
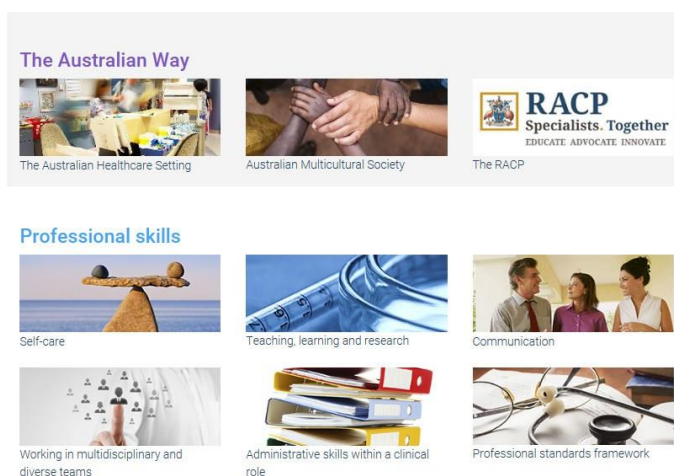
If you receive an interim assessment decision of partially comparable or substantially comparable, the RACP will notify AHPRA that you are eligible for registration for the purposes of progressing your specialist assessment requirements. This will not be necessary if you already have general [non-specialist] registration.

Examinations during assessment

If you are assessed as partially comparable to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician, you may be required to complete the relevant Faculty or Chapter Fellowship Examination(s). Examination requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis and you will be notified of all requirements when you receive your interim assessment decision. Further information on Faculty and Chapter Fellowship Examinations, including fees, is accessible on the RACP examinations webpage.

OTP orientation program, cultural safety course, and continuing professional development (CPD)

As part of your specialist assessment, you must complete the online OTP orientation program, complete a cultural safety course (provided by an Australian employer or through the RACP's eLearning platform), and participate in CPD. The orientation program will familiarise you with the Australian health environment in preparation for practice in Australia. You should complete the program within the first three months of commencing your requirements. The cultural safety course prepares you to work and interact with Australia's First Nations peoples. You may complete a course offered by your Australian employer or complete the RACP's online Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety course. The cultural safety course must be completed within your first six months of practice under specialist assessment in Australia.



Work-based assessment

Supervised Practice

If found partially or substantially comparable, you will be required to undertake what AHPRA refers to as supervised practice. For your RACP assessment, this supervised practice is completed through your top up training and/or peer review requirements.

Top up training

If found partially comparable, you may be required to undertake a period of top up training as part of your work-based assessment. You must secure a suitable training position and apply to the RACP OTP Team for approval before you begin your top up training. Top up training must be undertaken in Australia.

What is top up training?

Top up training is a period of supervised practice at the level of a final year advanced trainee that allows a partially comparable OTP to address identified gaps in the competencies required for Australian specialist practice. Top up training is usually required for 6 months or 12 months. Top up training is assessed at the level of a final year advanced trainee and is followed by a period of clinical practice under peer review.

Top up training requirements

The requirements for top up training are determined on a case-by-case basis. If applicable, you will be notified of these requirements when you receive your interim assessment decision. The following requirements generally apply:

- All top up training positions must be prospectively approved by the RACP (OTP Team). Previous practice in Australia cannot be retrospectively approved for top up training.
- You must secure a suitable top up training position independently.
- The College recommends Level 3 Supervision for OTPs completing top up training, however the employer should carefully consider this and propose an appropriate supervision level in the application for top up training.
- Top up training positions must be undertaken in a site accredited for RACP advanced training.
- To ensure that OTPs have high quality top up training, positions cannot exceed the number of accredited training positions at that same site for that specific specialty.

- You may be able to undertake top up training in multiple locations, but it is not normally appropriate for top up training to take place in more than three sites.
- You must have at least two onsite supervisors who are registered consultants in the same subspecialty, unless otherwise specified by the RACP.
- At least one supervisor must have held Fellowship of the relevant RACP Division, Faculty or Chapter for a minimum of three years. All other supervisors must have held Fellowship of the relevant RACP Division, Faculty or Chapter for a minimum of 12 months.

How to apply for top up training

You will need to find your own top up training position and you should be aware that positions are competitive in Australia. The RACP website has publicly available the list of accredited training sites for advanced training per specialty. When you have secured an appropriate position, you must submit a top up training application form. The application form should include the roles and responsibilities of the position. Generic Position Descriptions are not accepted as the training program needs to be relevant to you.

Your Case Officer will provide you with these documents when you need them. The RACP will assess the roles and responsibilities of the position to ensure that it meets your top up training requirements. The suitability of the supervisors will also be assessed.

What happens during top up training?

During top up training, the supervisors will assess whether you are operating at the level of a final year advanced trainee. Top up training requires you to have regular meetings with your supervisors and for there to be direct supervision of your clinical practice. Supervisors should guide and facilitate your development of knowledge and skills as outlined in the advanced training curricula. Both technical clinical skills and non-technical professional attributes described in the RACP's Professional qualities curriculum are considered important. Satisfactory reports of competency are required in all specified domains.

If your progress during top up training is unsatisfactory or if you fail an assessment, the RACP may require you to undertake further assessments (in addition to or instead of satisfactorily completing the failed assessment) and may revise its interim assessment of your comparability. You must pay additional fees for practice visits if you are required to undertake these assessments. Applicants should review the College price list for up-to-date fees.

Important considerations

Top up training must be completed at the level of a final year advanced trainee (although we recommended level 3 supervision through the entire period of top up training, the level will be determined by AHPRA). Any changes to your top up training position, responsibilities, or supervisors should be communicated to the College immediately. All changes must be prospectively approved by the College. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of support of

registration from the College.

Peer review

What is peer review?

Peer review is a period of supervised practice used to ensure that as an OTP, your performance is comparable to locally trained physicians and paediatricians. It is a supportive process that helps familiarise you with the Australian health system and connects you with experienced Australian physicians who can be mentors while you are new to specialist practice in Australia. All OTPs are required to undertake peer review.

Peer review requirements

- The RACP determines the duration and specific peer review requirements for each OTP.
- All peer review positions must be prospectively approved by the RACP. Your previous practice in Australia cannot be retrospectively approved for peer review.
- The College recommends Level 4 Supervision for OTPs completing peer review, however the employer should carefully consider this and propose an appropriate supervision level in the application for peer review.
- You must secure a suitable peer review position independently. Ideally this position will be at the level of a consultant physician but must be at least at the level of a senior registrar.
- The position should allow you to practise independently, and the role of the peer reviewer is to provide you with oversight and constructive feedback as opposed to the close supervision that would be expected during training.
- The position must expose you to the full range of clinical activities required in your specialty so that the RACP can assess your safety and competence for independent practice.
- Both technical clinical skills and the professional attributes described in the RACP's professional qualities curriculum will be observed and assessed by your peer reviewers.
- After completion of part of your peer review in the public setting, you may be able to undertake peer review in a private practice setting but it is not appropriate for private practice to make up more than half of your time in the position.
- You may be able to undertake peer review in multiple locations, but it is not normally appropriate for peer review to take place in more than three sites.
- Generally, you must have at least two onsite peer reviewers who are registered consultants in your subspecialty. Where only one on-site peer reviewer is in your subspecialty, you will be required to have a second on-site peer reviewer in a different subspecialty and a third external peer reviewer in the relevant subspecialty.

- At least one peer reviewer must have held Fellowship of the relevant RACP Division, Faculty or Chapter for a minimum of three years. All other peer reviewers must have held Fellowship of the relevant RACP Division, Faculty or Chapter for a minimum of 12 months.

Important considerations

Peer Review is ideally completed at the level of a consultant physician but must be at least at the level of a senior registrar (although we recommended level 4 supervision through the entire peer review process, the level will be determined by AHPRA). If the position is at a level of a senior registrar, your peer review reports should explicitly state that you practised independently with appropriate supervision.

Where possible, the RACP will be flexible with supervision arrangements to support workforce needs. Peer review arrangements are assessed on a case-by-case basis. It is essential that robust mechanisms are in place both to assess and support your transition to Australian practice.

Any changes to your peer review position, responsibilities, or supervisors are to be communicated to the College immediately. All changes must be prospectively approved by the College. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of support of registration from the College.

How to apply for peer review

When you have secured a position that meets these requirements, you must submit a peer review application form with the work-based assessment annual fee. The application form should include the roles and responsibilities of the position. Generic Position Descriptions are not accepted as the supervision plan needs to be relevant to you.

Your Case Officer will provide you with these documents at the appropriate time. The RACP will then assess the roles and responsibilities of the position as well as the suitability of the peer reviewers.

What happens during peer review?

During peer review, the peer reviewers will assess whether you are operating at the level of an Australian trained specialist. Peer review requires you to have regular meetings with your peer reviewers, and for them to have direct observation of your clinical practice including technical clinical skills and also observation of your professional behaviour.

Your peer reviewers must provide you with the support you need to orient you to specialist practice in Australia. They will provide regular reports to the RACP on your progress under peer review. These reports will be shared with you.

You must meet the responsibilities for peer review specified by the RACP and enable the effective monitoring of practice under peer review.

If your progress under peer review is unsatisfactory or if you fail an assessment, the RACP may require you to complete further assessments (in addition to or instead of satisfactorily completing the failed assessment) and may change its interim assessment of your comparability. You must pay additional fees for practice visits if required to take these assessments. You should review the College price list for up-to-date fees.

Changes to peer review arrangements must be approved by RACP

The approved peer review position and peer reviewers must be in place throughout the period of peer review. If the RACP is not advised of changes, including the approved arrangements for your contact time with peer reviewers, the period of peer review may not be recognised for specialist assessment.

You must disclose any changes in peer reviewers, peer review arrangements or work timetables to the RACP for approval.

If a peer reviewer is going to be absent for more than four consecutive weeks, alternative peer review arrangements need to be proposed to the RACP for approval.

If you do not comply with the requirements for peer review, the RACP may withdraw support for the continuation of your peer review and change its assessment of your comparability.

Reduction of Peer review period

If you have been assessed as partially or substantially comparable, you will be required to complete a period of satisfactory peer review. The required period of peer review will usually be 12 months, but a minimum peer review period of 6 months may be required subject to satisfactory progress.

If 12 months of peer review have been required, a reduction may be considered for approval by the RACP. Generally, the RACP will not grant a reduction in peer review until you have practised in Australia in an appropriately supervised position for a minimum of six months FTE, with all reports satisfactory. For a reduction to be considered, you will need to provide a letter of support from each peer reviewer. Please note, the OTP Work-Based Assessment annual fee is non-refundable if your peer review period is reduced.

Problems and disagreements

Most peer review relationships are effective and supportive, but sometimes there can be disagreement between an OTP and peer reviewers. You and your peer reviewers should make every effort to work together professionally to resolve any issues, communication problems or disagreements in your regular meetings. Serious issues may be mediated through the local People & Culture personnel and procedures at the hospital where the position is based.

You must communicate with the RACP as soon as possible if you consider that the peer review relationship is not effective or that peer reviewers are not meeting their responsibilities as peer reviewers. For example: if you are not having regular meetings with peer reviewers, if a peer reviewer is not giving you feedback, or if you cannot reach agreement with a peer reviewer about your performance, you must inform the RACP. The RACP can review peer review arrangements and make changes if necessary. It is much more effective to raise these issues early than to make a complaint after your peer review reports are missing or unsatisfactory at the end of your peer review period.

Other requirements and resources

Continuing professional development (CPD)

You must enrol and actively participate in the RACP continuing professional development program (MyCPD) when undertaking practice under peer review.

You will be required to record learning in MyCPD at regular intervals. Your participation will be monitored and form part of your peer review assessment.

Many activities undertaken during peer review are eligible to be claimed as CPD, such as completing the OTP orientation program, completing the required cultural safety course, peer review meetings, teaching, research, and self- assessment activities.

There is no additional cost for overseas trained physicians under peer review to participate in MyCPD.

Review the relevant section of the [RACP website](#) for more information on MyCPD.



Pomegranate Podcasts



Curated Collections



Journals



Physician Health and Wellbeing

eLearning

The RACP is dedicated to delivering quality online education. OTPs have several online education resources available to them, aimed to make learning more accessible. Some of these resources include the online Overseas Trained Physicians Orientation course, the College Learning Series, the Curated Collections, Pomegranate Podcast and many more. All these resources are available on the RACP website.

Support Helpline

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Support Program is a professional and confidential counselling service, available to all RACP Fellows, trainees and OTPs, 24 hours, seven days per week.

The program provides members with access to confidential counselling, coaching and support for workplace and personal issues. Details are available on the RACP website.

Monitoring

Additional requirements depending on progress

During your ongoing assessment, the RACP may require you to undertake additional training, supervised practice or assessments that are appropriate to develop and assess the competencies required in Australian specialist practice, as described in RACP advanced training curricula and assessment guidelines. Further requirements may include, but are not limited to, a multisource feedback exercise, a practice visit, a research project and/or a logbook.

Practice visits consist of a one-day site visit by two assessors, including a review of records, observation of procedures, observation of interactions with patients, and a discussion with the peer reviewers and the OTP. You must pay the practice visit fee if you are required to undertake this assessment.

Multisource feedback (MSF) is a well-recognised work-based activity that will provide specific and actionable feedback and assist you to identify your strengths and areas for practice improvement. The RACP may require you to undertake an MSF if issues are highlighted around the professional domains i.e., communication, personal skills, patient interaction and/or where there is limited onsite support or remote supervision.

If your progress in undertaking your requirements is unsatisfactory or if you fail an assessment, the RACP may require further assessments (in addition to or instead of satisfactorily completing the failed assessment) and may revise its interim assessment of your comparability to an Australian trained physician or paediatrician.

The RACP may withdraw support for your specialist assessment if you do not meet RACP requirements throughout the assessment process.

Definition of full-time equivalent practice

Full-time equivalent (FTE) practice, for the purpose of the additional requirements, is defined by AHPRA as 38 hours per week within your scope of practice. This is the maximum number of hours that can be counted per week. If you undertake supervised practice in a part-time position, you must complete the same minimum number of hours of practice. Pro rata reporting periods will apply for part-time positions.

Twelve months of practice means a minimum of 47 weeks FTE practice.

During your ongoing assessment, you are permitted to take a total of eight weeks (40 working days) of leave per 12 months of supervised practice during top up training or peer review. If leave is taken for four consecutive weeks or more, please notify your Case Officer as this time needs to be added to your reporting period. Part-time positions and OTPs completing supervision periods shorter than 12 months may take leave calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Final assessment

The RACP will conduct a final assessment to establish whether you have achieved the standard of an Australian trained physician or paediatrician currently entering the workforce in your subspecialty and that you are competent to practise as a specialist in Australia.

If you are comparable at the final assessment stage, the RACP will:

- provide you with a report confirming that you have completed the RACP's requirements for specialist recognition
- notify AHPRA that you have completed the RACP's requirements for specialist recognition and are eligible for specialist registration
- determine whether you are eligible for Fellowship of the RACP or relevant Faculty or Chapter and, if so, invite you to complete the relevant admission forms.

The RACP is not responsible for and cannot assist you with:

- applications for AHPRA specialist registration
- applications for Medicare provider status.

Timeframes for specialist assessment

The RACP follows the MBA Standards on the timeframes for assessment and will provide you with clear instructions on the timeframes for your specialist assessment requirements.

Partially comparable

If you are partially comparable, the maximum timeframe for completing your specialist assessment requirements is four years to complete up to **24 months** (full time equivalent) of supervised practice and upskilling with associated assessment including formal examinations for some specialties if required.

Substantially comparable

If you are substantially comparable, the maximum timeframe for completing your specialist assessment requirements is two years to complete up to **12 months** (full time equivalent) of peer review.

Starting point

The RACP defines the starting point for the maximum timeframes as up to **24 months** after the date of the RACP communication advising you of your interim assessment decision or the date when you commence your assessment requirements.

Extensions

During ongoing assessment, the RACP may consider your circumstances and grant an extension to the timeframe due to interruptions to your specialist assessment, for example due to parental leave, sickness or other interruption to be considered. You must put any request for extension in writing before the timeframe for completion expires and attach evidence to your request.

Non-completion

If you do not successfully complete all requirements within the maximum timeframes specified or during any extension granted to you, your specialist assessment will expire.

Re-assessment

If there has been a substantial material change to your overseas training and experience since you received your interim assessment decision from the RACP, you may apply for a re-assessment. The following guidelines apply to applications for re-assessment:

- You are not eligible to apply for re-assessment if you have been withdrawn from the specialist pathway because you have failed an examination or not progressed satisfactorily during your ongoing assessment. Under these circumstances, you should seek advice on the RACP training pathway. Alternatively, you can contact AHPRA regarding alternative pathways to registration in Australia.
- You cannot apply for re-assessment less than two years after receiving your interim assessment decision.
- You cannot apply for re-assessment if you are currently undergoing supervised practice for specialist assessment in the same specialty.
- To apply for re-assessment, you must provide documentary evidence of significant further overseas training and/or experience since receipt of your RACP interim assessment decision. This evidence will be made available to the relevant Subcommittee for review, along with your initial interim decision.
- The application steps described on pages 11 to 15 of this document apply to the re-assessment process. To ensure that you are not submitting unnecessary documentation, we recommend that you contact the OTP Team for individual advice on acceptable evidence.
- The possible outcomes of an initial assessment as described on pages 19 to 20 of this

document also apply to the re-assessment process.

- All fees (as outlined on page 13) apply to the re-assessment process.
- Once issued, your re-assessment decision falls under the College Reconsideration, Review and Appeals By-Law.

RACP follows the MBA Standards on re-assessment. Applications for re-assessment should not be confused with an appeal of a RACP decision on comparability or situations when the RACP initiates a re-assessment.

Withdrawal

You may withdraw your specialist assessment application at any stage. This may include, but is not limited to:

- withdrawing from one specialty and continuing in another
- withdrawing from only the specialist recognition or area of need component of an assessment
- withdrawing an entire application if you do not wish to undertake the prescribed assessments.

Please note all fees for the specialist assessment process are non-refundable.

Your roles and responsibilities

Understanding the processes

You will have a Case Officer to guide you through the assessment process, but it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with all aspects of assessment, registration and employment regulation in Australia. This includes understanding the role of the AMC, the RACP, the MBA and the Services Australia (Medicare provider status) as well as organisations that can assist with immigration and employment opportunities. You are required to take actions to advance your application. It is your responsibility to act within these timeframes specified by the RACP.

Timeframes

Completion of specialist assessment and area of need assessment can take significant time. To be fair to all applicants, applications are processed as they are received. You can assist the process by ensuring that you provide all the required documents and by responding promptly to requests for information or action including payment of fees.

The RACP will inform you at every stage of the timeframes within which you are required to take actions to advance your application. It is your responsibility to act within these timeframes.

You should refer to the information on maximum timeframes for completion of ongoing assessment requirements in these guidelines (page 30) and to the current Medical Board of Australia Standards for the specialist international medical graduate assessment process.

Duty to disclose all relevant information

It is your responsibility to communicate adequate information to support the assessment of your comparability with an Australian trained physician or paediatrician at all stages of the specialist assessment process. You must fully and openly disclose all information that may be relevant throughout the application, interim assessment, ongoing assessment and final assessment processes. Non-disclosure of relevant information may result in the RACP rejecting your application.

Academic Integrity

All OTPs need to be aware of their responsibilities in relation to academic integrity as set out by the RACP Academic Integrity in Training Process and the RACP Academic Integrity Policy. Academic misconduct is a breach of academic integrity. This includes, but is not limited to, obtaining unfair advantage, distribution of restricted material, collaboration in an individual assignment or assessment, falsification, plagiarism and misrepresentation.

All cases of alleged academic misconduct are dealt with consistently, openly, justly and fairly using an appropriate process in line with the RACP academic integrity in training process.

Confirming your specialties

You may apply for specialist assessment in multiple specialties. It is your responsibility to clearly indicate in which specialties you wish to be assessed. Once your application has progressed to interim assessment, you cannot amend your application to include additional subspecialties. You will be required to submit a new application with the relevant fees if you wish to be assessed in an additional specialty after the interim assessment stage. Eligibility criteria needs to be met for each specialty.

Communication with the RACP and supervisors

You must communicate to the RACP any change in circumstances that has an impact on your application, interim assessment, ongoing assessment or final assessment decision. This includes a duty to clearly communicate any changes to peer review or top up training arrangements. You must notify the RACP as soon as possible if you consider that the arrangements with your peer reviewers or top up training supervisors are not operating

effectively or that your peer reviewers or supervisors are not meeting their responsibilities. Failure to do so may result in the RACP withdrawing support for registration with AHPRA. Applicants and supervisors should familiarise themselves with the Medical Board of Australia Guidelines – Supervised practice for IMGs.

Seeking employment in Australia

It is important to note that the College does not play a direct role in the appointment of trainees or OTPs to training or peer review positions. It is your responsibility to research potential employment opportunities and to secure a suitable top up training or peer review position in Australia within the timeframes specified. These positions must meet the specific requirements outlined by the RACP and are likely to be very competitive.

It is also recommended that you seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs to ensure you are aware of your working rights in Australia.

Summary of OTP responsibilities during top up training and peer review

Your responsibilities for your required periods of top up training and peer review include:

- securing a suitable position which must be prospectively approved with appropriate supervision/peer review arrangements
- ensuring you have regular meetings with your supervisors/peer reviewers and that the required documentation, communications and monitoring are completed for each reporting period and throughout the top up training/peer review process
- engaging fully with the top up training/peer review process and responding constructively to feedback and areas for development
- communicating with the RACP at all times on concerns, changes and developments that impact on your top up training and peer review arrangements.

Reconsideration, review or appeal of a College decision

If you are dissatisfied with a decision made by a College Body, you may be eligible to apply for a reconsideration, review or appeal of that decision. The first stage is reconsideration by the same College Body that made the decision. The second stage is review by the College Body that oversees the College Body that made the decision. The third stage is appeal to an Appeals Committee appointed by the RACP Board. You must submit an application for reconsideration, review or appeal within 28 days of receiving your decision. It will take approximately 8-12 weeks for the College to make a reconsideration, review or appeal decision. Please refer to the [RACP Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process FAQs](#) and [By-Law](#) on the website for further information.

Changes to guidelines

The College may amend these Guidelines at any time and will ensure that future amendments comply with applicable law and applicable RACP policies, guidelines and related documents.

Review date: 2024

Related documents & websites

- Medical Board of Australia. Standards. Specialist medical college assessment of specialist international medical graduates
- Medical Board of Australia. Information for international medical graduates (IMGs). Guide to the Specialist Pathway
- Medical Board of Australia. Registration standard: English language skills
- Medical Board of Australia. Guidelines for supervised practice for IMGs
- AHPRA Fact sheet. Requirements for translating documents
- Australian Medical Council. Information on primary source verification
- RACP policy on assessment of Overseas Trained Physicians and Paediatricians (OTPs)
- RACP Professional Practice Framework
- RACP pricelist
- RACP Basic Training curricula
- RACP Advanced Training curricula
- RACP Academic Integrity in Training Process
- RACP Academic Integrity Policy
- RACP Reconsideration, Review and Appeal By-Law

Application forms

All application forms are available on the RACP website.

Definitions

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| AHPRA | Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency |
| AMC | Australian Medical Council |
| Area of need | Area of need positions are declared by Australian state or territory governments in locations where there is a shortage of medical specialists. |
| Chapters | The chapters of the RACP, namely the Chapter of Addiction Medicine, Chapter of Palliative Care Medicine and the Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine. The Chapters each award distinct fellowships (e.g., Fellow of the Australasian Chapter of Palliative Medicine, FACHPM). |
| Comparability | A determination of how the OTP's training, qualifications, experience and achievements compare with the standard of an Australian trained specialist in the same specialty currently entering the workforce. |
| Competency | An assessment of an OTP's level of clinical practice compared with the standard of an Australian trained specialist in the same specialty currently entering the workforce. |
| CPD | Continuing professional development |
| Peer review | Supervised work in a particular field for a specified duration at a specified level of professional responsibility. |
| Divisions | The divisions of the RACP, namely the Adult Medicine Division and the Paediatrics and Child Health Division. |
| Faculties | The Faculties of the RACP, namely the Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, the Faculty of Public Health Medicine, and the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine each award distinct fellowships (e.g., Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, FAFPHM). |
| MBA | Medical Board of Australia |
| OTP | Overseas trained physician or paediatrician |
| PSV | Primary source verification (of qualifications) |
| Practice visit | A one day site visit by two assessors who assess the practice of the OTP, including a review of records, observation of procedures, observation of interactions with patients, and a discussion with the peer reviewers and the OTP. |
| RACP | Royal Australasian College of Physicians |
| Registration body | The Government body empowered by law to register medical practitioners (at the time of writing, the Medical Board of Australia). |



RACP

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